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Letter dated 9 May 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Written statement submitted by the International Human Rights Law Group, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (Category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1396 (XLIV).

1. The International Human Rights Law Group, a non-governmental organization which seeks to promote the rule of law throughout the world, welcomes the Commission's decision to convene in response to this urgent crisis. Continuing human rights violations as well as growing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in Rwanda necessitate immediate action. The International Human Rights Law Group supports and encourages efforts to restore peace in Rwanda, end the massacres of civilians, redress rights violations, and assure that those responsible for initiating or carrying out the abuses be held accountable.

2. The violence in Rwanda is not random and the massive deaths reported are not incident to a battle between armed forces. According to repeated and corroborated accounts, Rwanda governmental forces and vigilante gangs have engaged in widespread concerted violence against the Tutsi people amounting to genocide. Extrajudicial executions, destruction of homes and villages, and frustration of United Nation personnel's peace-keeping efforts have become commonplace in the past seven weeks. The systematic killings of members of the Tutsi minority, as French health minister Philippe Douste stated, may amount to the "greatest example of genocide of the end of the twentieth century".

3. The "ethnic cleansing" occurring in Rwanda involves violations of the most fundamental and non-derogable rights, including the rights to life, to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and to collective enjoyment of cultural life by a minority. In addition, there are violations of the rights to liberty and security of persons and other basic rights.

4. The prior examples of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iraq both support the necessity of a swift, effective response by the international community to the violence in Rwanda. Proactive measures initiated by the Commission are an imperative to end violence and hold those responsible to account. The United Nations must seek both to provide effective redress for the current violations and to deter future violations. The International Human Rights Law Group urges the Commission to:

(a) Appoint a Special Rapporteur on Rwanda to visit Rwanda, investigate abuses of rights, and report the findings to the Security Council and General Assembly. The Special Rapporteur should also examine practical procedures to bring the human rights violators to justice and deter future violations;

(b) Dispatch a large, well-trained delegation of civilian human rights monitors. These monitors should be involved in documenting the abuses which have occurred since 6 April 1994 and reporting on current conditions. They should cooperate with local and international non-governmental organizations to ensure that all relevant information regarding human rights abuses is verified and channelled to the appropriate body. The human rights component should remain in the country during any transition period to assist in instituting human rights norms;

(c) Convey a strong message to the Security Council and General Assembly that actions must be taken to permanently end the mayhem in Rwanda. Urge the Security Council to integrate human rights experts into any planned military operations and any mediation efforts;

(d) Deploy an enlarged force of United Nations civilian police monitors to help UNAMIR restore and maintain stability in Rwanda. Expand the monitors' role to include helping prevent future executions;

(e) Support measures to allow for the safe and equitable return of Rwandese refugees. Efforts should be made to compensate victims and their families for losses inflicted by Rwandan governmental forces.